



**Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona**

PRESS RELEASE

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WINDOW ROCK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

PHOENIX -- Ferdinand Raymond Notah, age 51, of Window Rock, Ariz. and Farmington, N.M., pleaded guilty to Theft of Public Funds in federal district court in Phoenix on Friday, January 28, 2005.

Notah had been charged with violating Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 641. The indictment charged that in December, 2000, Notah was hired as Executive Director of the Four Corners Enterprise Community Corporation (4CEC), a non-profit corporation organized according to the laws of the Navajo Nation to obtain federal grants and use that money for economic development and infrastructure projects in impoverished communities within the Navajo Reservation. 4CEC had been receiving and disbursing grants for such projects from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program since approximately 1999. As Executive Director, Notah had access to all of 4CEC's bank accounts, which contained several hundred thousand dollars of USDA grant money that had been earmarked for development projects in the Navajo community.

The indictment charged that between July, 2001, and September, 2002, Notah withdrew over \$177,000 from 4CEC's bank account, either at bank ATMs or at casino check-cashing facilities, and used that grant money for gambling and other personal expenses.

A conviction for Theft of Public Funds carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. Sentencing is set before Judge Earl H. Carroll on April 18, 2005. The investigation in this case was conducted by the USDA's Office of Inspector General.

The prosecution is being handled by John J. Tuchi, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-892-PCT-EHC
RELEASE NUMBER: 2005-012

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